

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING

March 10, 2009

First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Jaime Tidlund, Linda Hess, Pat Wagner, Ruth Hazzard, Sarah Swartz
Members Absent: Pauline Lannon
Staff Present: David Ziomek
Non Member Present: Diana Stein (Select Board Liaison), Bob Saul, Jack Saul, Win Levine, John Gerber, David Tepfer, Mary Wentworth, Sally Fitz, Karen Roinanowski, Dan Kaplan, Alan Snow, Dawn Winkler, Sherry Wilson, Pete Westover, Julie Johnson, Jeremy Barker Plotkin

A brief introduction session took place to get to know all non-members present and their role and interest in the farming community in Amherst.

A discussion on growing more food in Amherst took place with many ideas brought forth, including:

- Sarah Swartz let everyone know about a new web-site that is up and running WWW.Harvesttrader.com which will allow people to advertise so they can sell or buy local produce that is in abundance. It is by farmers for farmers.
- Getting people involved with the Conservation Commission to educate people on where there may be available town land to grow, and to look at remaining farm land in town that is not protected for wildlife. Also possibly contact 61A landowners that have land that is currently under utilized.
- Increase the number of community gardens to get more of the public involved and educated.
- Is there a place for an additional farmers market in town, discussion about expanding the current market onto adjacent side roads, there is a lot that can be done to make the current market better. Kendrick Park was again brought up. A comment by the garden club let everyone know that the current farmers market did not make them feel welcome when they began their plant sale on the common on the same day the market took place.
- Issues about expanding the current market were brought up, with the main one being the renovations at the Lord Jeff causing traffic issues, another being loss of town revenue due to meters not being used and another being general safety of pedestrians if the market was expanded to side roads.
- An idea was brought forth about Amherst leading the way and showing how great local is by making maps of local farms and farm stands. Get people involved and get more information to the public.
- Somebody thought transportation was an issue for people, so letting people know about farms on the bus route, or about folks like Jessica Harwood.
- Mention of the Empowering ourselves series will be taking place 3/25/09 at ACTV, which is beneficial for people to learn about become more self-sufficient.
- Open up some community land for more immigrant farmers to work and teach.
- People mentioned that the "market" is changing and peoples views are changing, people are realizing that local is better, it is cheaper to make your own food from scratch and it is cheaper to stay healthy by eating local and healthy. The more growers the better it is not a competition only the tip of the iceberg has been scratched.
- Possibly begin a local/community web site so people know what is what, and about off season produce and other things available.
- Amherst Canning Club.
- Have something where food is grown and prepared by local restaurants and brought to the schools to get more local stuff into the school community and get more of the community involved.

This portion of the meeting was dismissed with many good ideas still floating around and the invitation to come to the next Agcom meeting to continue this discussion.

Commission Resignation: Sarah Swartz submitted her resignation from the Agricultural Commission.

Approved at the April 14, 2009 Agricultural Commission meeting.
Minutes submitted by Jaime Tidlund

Farmers' Forum – March 24th, 2009: Everything in place for the forum David is going to contact Peter Westover, Sheila Rainford and Ruth Jones and invite them to come speak about the farm book that was just published.

Farm Festival – October 3rd, 2009: A new farm festival sub-committee was announced with the members being Ruth Hazzard, Pat Wagner and Jaime Tidlund. Pat is going to contact Mark Power and Ronnie Booxbaum and set up a meeting with them

Ag Com Input: Ruth is going to write a letter asking this planning board, zoning board, conservation commission, board of health and the select board to notify the Agricultural commission in a timely manner of any issues coming before them so that the agricultural commission can review and respond.

Website: Discussion about the Agricultural commission posting information of the town web site from here forward, including letters and other various items drafted at or following meetings.

Gas Tax: Discussion of the proposed gas tax increase took place; Jaime is going to find out more information on farmers being able to deduct on their taxes any fuel or gas used off road.

Sample agenda for 4/14/09 meeting:

- Continue discussion on growing more food in Amherst
- Gas tax update
- Follow up on Farmers forum
- Update of Farm Festival
- Update of any new members or possible new members